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Friday, 20 March 2009, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Dabbashi	(Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

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09-27501 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of the Czech Republic and the Sudan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Abdelmannan (Sudan) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Kaiser (Czech Republic) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Rashid Khalikov, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Khalikov to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Rashid Khalikov, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Khalikov: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in the northern Sudan.

In the two and a half weeks since the Government of the Sudan decided to suspend the operations of three national and expel 13 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the northern Sudan, the United Nations has continued to advocate at all levels for a reversal of this decision. The needs of vulnerable people continue to be the first and main consideration of this effort. The Secretary-General has been in close contact with Arab and African leaders and members of this Council, all of whom have expressed their concern about the plight of the vulnerable people across the Sudan. We are equally concerned that the decision has resulted in very harsh treatment in Darfur and Khartoum of staff members and organizations that had been invited as guests of the Government of the Sudan to assist the Sudanese people.

While we continue to press for the reversal of this decision and to underscore its impact on the lives of the Sudanese population, the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan agreed to complete a series of rapid assessments in the three Darfur states. Teams have been tasked to ascertain the gaps in four life-saving sectors: food aid, health and nutrition, shelter and, lastly, water and sanitation. The teams have also assessed the capacity available to cover the immediate life-threatening needs. The findings will be finalized this weekend with Government counterparts in Khartoum. We should be able to speak more next week about their impact on the wider assistance effort in Darfur.

Since Assistant Secretary-General Bragg briefed the Security Council on 6 March, there have been significant signs of an erosion of humanitarian response capacity, with a concurrent impact on the lives of people in Darfur. We see this particularly in the camps, but we believe that gaps may also be opening up in rural areas where there is no longer a humanitarian presence. For example, in Zam Zam camp, near El Fasher, the departure of two key NGOs leaves the remaining, smaller agencies to cope with more than 36,000 newly-arrived internally displaced persons. It may be recalled that these people were forced to flee after fighting in Muhajariya in the South Sudan. These began with clashes between the Sudan Liberation Army-Minnawi and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and led to fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces and JEM that included air attacks in and around the town by the Sudanese air force in January and February. The departure of Médecins sans Frontières-France from Nertiti in West Darfur has left the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and the World Health

Organization without an implementing partner to carry out vaccination campaigns and treatment for the meningitis outbreak in Jebel Mara. The loss of partners has led to a similar situation in Kalma and prevented the mass immunization campaign that has been so desperately needed.

Overall, it has become clear that the loss of the support provided to local NGOs and Government line ministries has eroded operational management capacity in key sectors. It is also troubling that the Government has continued to seize humanitarian assets. In one particular case, the Government has still not returned control of a United Nations warehouse, containing shelter and other items, to the United Nations. We are grateful that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation (UNAMID) in Darfur has helped the humanitarian community protect many essential supplies in the past two weeks, but it is regrettable that this continues to be necessary, especially in areas controlled by the Government.

I should also note that the impact of the decision is now being felt elsewhere, in particular in the three protocol areas of Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Abyei. The delivery of humanitarian and development assistance in those areas is crucial to the successful implementation of the already fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The loss of operational capacity is not the only challenge we are facing on the ground. Insecurity affecting beneficiaries and aid workers alike has been increasing for quite some time. The kidnapping of two Sudanese and three expatriate staff members of Médecins sans Frontières in North Darfur temporarily halted all operations in rural areas of that state. We are grateful for the work of the Sudanese authorities to help secure their release.

Regrettably, this abduction is part of a wider pattern. Over the past two weeks, three separate attacks on UNAMID saw one peacekeeper killed and three others injured. We urge the Government to minimize its rhetoric against foreigners in the media and to ensure the safety and security of all United Nations and associated staff. We also urge armed groups in Darfur to take active steps to ensure that United Nations and NGO staff stay safe.

On 15 March, we noted with concern remarks by President Al-Bashir referring to the possible departure of all foreign humanitarian organizations in the Sudan in a year's time. The Humanitarian Coordinator will take this up further with the Government.

As the conflict continues, and as many parts of Darfur continue to be unstable or are under the influence of the rebel groups, the work of the United Nations and its partners will continue to be vital in helping Sudanese citizens affected by conflict receive the aid to which they have the right. We urge all leaders in Darfur — State and non-State — to facilitate the provision of life-saving assistance to civilians in need.

There is no doubt that our ability to help the people of Darfur and northern Sudan has been seriously compromised. The current atmosphere of fear and uncertainty facing all aid organizations is affecting the assistance available to the people of Darfur. The hard-won partnership between the Government and aid organizations has been cast aside in a way that raises questions as to how this relationship can move forward. We must find a way to decrease tensions and ensure the timely and sustainable provision of protection and humanitarian assistance, based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

We urge the Government of the Sudan to use the mechanisms established explicitly for the purpose of resolving disagreements. We also believe that the provisions of Sudanese law and the agreements with the international community, including the Joint Communiqué on the facilitation of humanitarian assistance in Darfur, should be respected and used. We want to engage in a transparent and productive dialogue with the Government based on these laws and agreements.

The safety and security of all aid workers — national and international — and of commodities and assets, whether owned by NGOs, United Nations agencies or Member States, must be assured. We look forward to the results of the joint assessment missions, which will be important to show the scale of the gaps and the capacity needed to fill them.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Khalikov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Abdelmannan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on

your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month. I also welcome the interest that your presidency has focused on the affairs of our African continent, most recently with respect to support for the African Union's peacekeeping capacities. This demonstrates the wisdom of your brotherly country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, as it assumes the presidency of the African Union, the United Nations principal partner in Darfur.

My delegation has closely followed the circumstances that have prompted the convening of today's meeting of the Security Council at a time when the Council's programme includes consultations on Darfur, scheduled for 26 March, at which the Joint African Union-United Nations Chief Mediator for Darfur, Mr. Djibril Bassolé, will give a comprehensive briefing on the political process and other relevant actions concerning the settlement of the Darfur problem.

It seems to me that the political track is not a priority for some people who are seeking to fan the flames and invent crises in an open attempt to divert the international community's attention from the broad international and regional rejection of the legally and politically flawed approach adopted by the so-called International Criminal Court (ICC) against the Sudanese State, Government and people. These people have sought to fabricate and inflate a problem with respect to the decision of the Government of the Sudan to expel a number of non-governmental organizations that have crossed every red line and dared to prejudice the sovereignty of the country and take advantage of the kindness of the Sudanese people.

As we have heard, these organizations are the guests of the Sudan — a fact that my country has taken fully into account. However, guests are bound by the rules of hospitality to remain in the places specifically assigned to them and not to enter the private rooms of their host.

The decision of the Government of the Sudan is a legitimate sovereign decision that we will never reverse. It is not up for discussion, especially since the Government of the Sudan has not expelled every organization working in my country. The organizations that have been expelled number 13 out of a total of some 118 and represent a mere 7 per cent of those working in the Sudan. Thus, it is false to depict the situation as if the Sudan had expelled all organizations.

The decision made by the President of the Sudan to "Sudanize" volunteer work in the country should be supported, rather than denigrated, by the United Nations and the Security Council. The decision is based on the premise that the State should assume its full responsibility in this matter.

I must stress here in this Chamber that the Government of the Sudan reiterates its full respect for all the agreements and treaties it has signed with the United Nations to facilitate humanitarian work in Darfur, including with respect to the fast-track provision of emergency relief to those in need. However, we call on the Security Council to address the situation in Darfur in a more comprehensive manner that takes into consideration the fact that the political approach represents the optimal way to resolve the problem. All other aspects — humanitarian, security and even justice — are merely being exploited by some as pretexts for the current action of the ICC. That action now represents the main threat to any political settlement. We are all aware of the statements issued by the various rebel groups following the ICC's decision and the ensuing lack of security and abductions of humanitarian workers providing essential assistance.

The ICC's decision came at a time when the political process was on the verge of bearing fruit. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities to work towards the establishment of peace and security in the Sudan, rather than raise new issues and fabricate and inflate new crises in my country. We hope that the Council will act appropriately. We seek its support and assistance, and not further problems or violations in this matter.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I am grateful for the convening of today's meeting, which is timely given the very widespread concerns that my Government and others have about the future humanitarian situation in the Sudan following recent decisions by the Government of that country.

I should like to begin by thanking the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Khalikov, for his briefing on the situation in the Sudan as he sees it now. What he said raises substantial concerns in our minds about the prospects for the people in need in the Sudan. It is important to keep in mind that we are talking about the lives of millions of vulnerable people who need our support

and who have been receiving it in recent years. The issues concerning the humanitarian situation should not be mixed up with wider political questions.

The expulsion of the 13 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the closure of three Sudanese NGOs are completely unacceptable. We join the Secretary-General and the leaders of many United Nations Member States in calling on the Government of the Sudan to reverse its decision. As the Secretary-General has said, expulsions will cause irrevocable damage to humanitarian operations in the Sudan. They also violate both the humanitarian communiqués signed by the Sudan with the United Nations and the provisions of the recent Doha agreement, which the Sudan signed only a few weeks ago.

The representative of the Sudan has said that only 13 out of 118 NGOs have been expelled and claimed that that represents only 7 per cent. The reality, as I think we all know, is that some 40 to 50 per cent of humanitarian capacity in Darfur has now been removed. All but a few of the 237 international staff who used to work for the expelled NGOs in Darfur have left the Sudan. The local staff they have left behind remain vulnerable to duress and are not in a position to sustain the relief operations. Supplies of critical fuel and medicine are not being distributed; nor are new supplies being ordered, putting at risk the populations that the NGOs have been supplying for several years.

In Darfur, within a period of weeks, this will inevitably mean increased risk of disease and malnutrition. The lack of water, food and shelter could increase insecurity, particularly in large, volatile camps such as the Kalma and Muhajariya camps, in southern Darfur. We cannot rule out the possibility of this leading to civil disturbances and mass movements of internally displaced people.

These decisions have consequences beyond Darfur. These could include the displacement of internally displaced people in the Sudan across the border into Chad. The decision to expel these NGOs has an even bigger impact in the southern regions of Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Abyie, where the 13 NGOs affected provided the great bulk of humanitarian assistance.

The United Kingdom is the second-largest bilateral donor to the Sudan. We have pledged £36 million to the Common Humanitarian Fund for this year. It is our single largest humanitarian effort anywhere in the world. We remain committed to helping the people of the Sudan. But the actions of the Government of the Sudan have made it harder for us to do so in conformity with internationally accepted principles.

We look forward to receiving the assessment report being prepared by the United Nations and officials of the Government of the Sudan on the impact of the expulsions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the Sudan. The Security Council will need to return to this issue when the report is available.

One thing is certain: the United Kingdom will hold the Government of the Sudan responsible for the suffering that its decision causes. The people of Darfur have suffered enough from five years of war. It is inexplicable why their Government would want to add unnecessarily to their misery. We stand ready to work with all concerned to find ways to ensure that vulnerable people in Darfur and other parts of the Sudan continue to receive the humanitarian assistance they desperately need.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for the information he has provided this afternoon, which itself is justification for the holding of this meeting.

The decision by the Government of the Sudan to halt the operations of the 13 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned, which provide humanitarian assistance in northern Sudan, including in Darfur, is, to say the least, unfortunate. That decision not only inappropriately links the humanitarian situation with a decision by an international tribunal; it also jeopardizes the lives of a considerable number of people and opens the door to a crisis of major proportions by creating obstacles to access for international assistance. That jeopardizes the lives of large parts of the population, in particular those of vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Mexico is also concerned about the safety and security of humanitarian personnel on the ground, given the repeated incidents of intimidation and threats reported by OCHA. Mexico unreservedly condemns those incidents.

In order to address the situation in the Sudan as comprehensively as possible, my delegation urgently calls upon the Government of the Sudan to reverse its decision, allow the return of the non-governmental organizations that have been expelled and facilitate and guarantee adequate access for humanitarian aid and assistance to the civilian population, in line with the norms of international humanitarian law.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I would like to thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) for its briefing this afternoon.

We have all just heard a truly troubling report: a depiction of a crisis created by one man that threatens the lives more than one and a half million men, women and children. The United States strongly condemns the Government of Sudan's expulsion of 13 international aid organizations and its closure of three Sudanese aid groups. By expelling aid groups, the Sudanese Government is denying water, food, health care and sanitation to people it drove out of their homes in the first place, thereby exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Let me be clear: this is not a made-up crisis, as the representative of Sudan would have the Council believe. On the contrary, this is a very real and urgent crisis of his Government's own making. President Al-Bashir and his Government are responsible, and must be held accountable, for each and every death caused by these callous and calculated actions. The Sudanese Government made this decision and owns its consequences, which will not only cost lives but leave the Government locked deeper in an isolation of its own making.

Surely, no person of conscience can remain unmoved by the untold misery and death that this cut-off of desperately needed food, water and medicine will inevitably inflict upon millions of innocents already huddled in the camps of Darfur. Surely, we all believe that this body must act on their behalf. And surely, we all believe that we should speak with one voice in the face of such suffering.

We urge the international community to press the Government of Sudan to reverse its expulsion edict and to ensure it does nothing to worsen an already grave situation. President Al-Bashir created this crisis, and he should rectify it immediately. The United States, for its part, is working urgently, closely and intensively with United Nations institutions and other Member States to try to reverse the Government of Sudan's expulsion order. But today the Council heard the Sudanese representative say that his Government would never reverse this order.

The United States believes that Member States and the Council must never stand by idly while over a million people are at imminent risk of death. Time is of the essence. The United Nations has already reported that it has become significantly more difficult to provide food to already malnourished Sudanese children.

We also believe that the new shortfalls in water have made meningitis more widespread in the Jebel Marra area and in the Kalma camp. On top of that, the lack of health care is preventing meningitis patients from receiving proper treatment. When treated, the death rate for those with meningitis can be one in ten or lower. Left untreated, the death rate jumps to one in two. We remain deeply concerned that meningitis and other infectious diseases will continue to spread inside camps and other areas that now lack reliable access to water, food and basic medical services.

We are also facing a growing humanitarian crisis in the Zam Zam camp, in north Darfur. Resources there have already been stretched to the limit, and now the camp is struggling to house more than 36,000 internally displaced people fleeing the recent fighting in south Darfur between rebels and the Government. We urge the Sudanese Government, in close consultation with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, to address water, housing and other problems at Zam Zam and the other camps across Darfur, before an already dire situation deteriorates any further.

The United States supports the urgent efforts by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the World Food Programme and others to provide relief now, including desperately needed clean water. But make no mistake: these efforts cannot even begin to fill the gap left by the expelled aid groups.

With every passing day, President Al-Bashir has used increasingly menacing rhetoric to further escalate the crisis. By doing so, he has jeopardized the safety of the remaining brave men and women from all across the world who provide urgently needed aid to the Sudanese people, and he has further jeopardized the

lives of innocent civilians in the camps, who depend on that aid.

Meanwhile, UNAMID continues to operate under dangerous conditions. The 17 March ambush of UNAMID peacekeepers in South Darfur, which left one of them dead, only underscores the risks they continue to run in Darfur. We offer our deepest condolences to the peacekeeper's family and to the men and women of UNAMID. We reaffirm the commitment of the United States to support them as UNAMID implements its important mandate.

The United States will continue to work closely with the United Nations, humanitarian aid groups and others to relieve the suffering of the people of Darfur. Since 2004, we have provided nearly $4 billion for humanitarian programmes in Sudan and eastern Chad. During fiscal year 2008 and thus far in fiscal year 2009, we have provided nearly $1.25 billion for the people of Sudan.

We continue to be proud of the efforts of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has provided more than $720 million in humanitarian aid in Darfur in fiscal year 2008 and thus far in 2009. But, at a stroke, the expulsions eliminated some 54 per cent of USAID's non-food programmes in Darfur, cutting off life-saving efforts to provide health, water and sanitation. The expulsions also eliminated an estimated 40 per cent of the delivery capacity of USAID's main partner in providing food aid in Darfur, the World Food Programme.

We sincerely hope that this body will finally come together as one to protect the people of Darfur. The United States is determined to pursue long-term peace in the Darfur region, ensure that humanitarian aid is delivered and spare innocent civilians from further harm. We urge other members of the Council to join us in this urgent work. There are things upon which we can, and will, disagree. But, surely, saving the lives of desperate and innocent civilians being deliberately deprived of water, food and medicine is not among them. The Government of Sudan created this crisis. It now must act to end it.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I too would like to thank Mr. Khalikov for his briefing on the humanitarian situation in Darfur, which is without doubt one of the world's greatest emergency situations.

I would like to associate myself with those who have condemned the attacks against the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), including the one on 17 March in Nyala, which resulted in the death of a Nigerian Blue Helmet, and the one on 9 March on a UNAMID vehicle in El Geneina, which injured four troops. We hope that Sudanese officials will ensure that the perpetrators of those attacks are arrested. We call upon all Sudanese actors to cooperate fully with UNAMID, which is in the Sudan to maintain peace and assist the most vulnerable. We must ensure that UNAMID's deployment is completed quickly.

I would also like to call on all parties to cooperate in order to prevent a worsening of the humanitarian situation in Darfur. We once again deplore the decision by the Government of the Sudan to suspend the activities of several Sudanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to expel more than a dozen international NGOs that are carrying out crucial humanitarian activities and which have an international reputation for seriousness and impartiality.

Along with the Secretary-General, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and all the countries of the European Union, France hopes that the Sudanese authorities will reverse their decision and refrain for further expulsions. The operations of the NGOs affected by the Government's decision account for more than half of the humanitarian effort in Darfur. As OCHA's representative has indicated, that decision threatens to deprive more than 1 million people of food, health care and drinking water. In that connection, we look forward to the conclusions of the joint assessment currently being carried by OCHA and the Sudanese authorities to more precisely determine all the consequences of that decision that once again puts the people concerned in a situation of unbearable deprivation.

In that regard, I would like to commend UNAMID and the agencies of the United Nations system — including the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization — who are doing their best to avert an even graver humanitarian tragedy.

We regret the abruptness and speed with which Sudanese Government agencies have implemented the

expulsion order, including harassment and intimidation against NGOs still on the ground. We consider it essential to ensure the protection of the 6,000 people who make up the national staff of the NGOs that have been expelled. Clearly, it is also very important to protect the property of the expelled NGOs.

The continuation of humanitarian efforts in Darfur is essential for the nearly 4 million people who depend upon them, in particular the 2.5 million displaced persons. The challenge is to protect the people of Darfur. That requires that all parties, beginning with Sudanese officials, act responsibly regardless of the circumstances. In that regard, I should like to emphasize the crucial need for all parties to the conflict, including the authorities in Khartoum, to respect the binding norms of international humanitarian law, in particular those relating to humanitarian access to victims and the protection of humanitarian staff.

The issue of humanitarian assistance and the issue of international criminal justice must absolutely be kept apart. France reaffirms its support for international criminal justice and its independence, and reiterates the Sudan's obligation to cooperate with the International Criminal Court, in accordance with resolution 1593 (2005). To punish its own population is certainly not the correct response. As the representative of the Sudan has himself said, we too believe in the value of dialogue and the need to provide a political solution to this crisis. We also believe that combating impunity cannot be delinked from the search for peace in Darfur, or anywhere else in the world. We therefore look forward to our 26 March discussion with Joint Chief Negotiator Bassolé.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this afternoon's meeting. We are also grateful to the representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for the update on humanitarian situation in the Sudan, and in Darfur in particular.

We note with deep concern the grave humanitarian situation in Darfur, particularly after the decision of the Government of the Sudan to revoke the registration and licences of major humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We have already witnessed serious consequences since the previous briefing, on 6 March, including the closing of some medical facilities and a shortage of water in some camps. It is clear that the damage will only increase. We are also concerned about what the food situation will be after the current stockpile is exhausted.

OCHA's briefing has made it abundantly clear that United Nations humanitarian programmes themselves largely rely on those NGOs for the delivery of assistance, and that the United Nations and the remaining NGOs cannot replace the significant loss caused by this decision. NGOs are the implementing partners of the United Nations. It is impossible for the United Nations to compensate for their absence and replace the work that was done by the expelled NGOs. We understand that it is the intention of the Government of the Sudan to increase the presence of national NGOs to replace their work, but that will take a long time to implement, and the most vulnerable affected persons need urgent assistance.

Japan is one of the major donors to the Sudan. On 8 March, just 12 days ago, Japan decided to extend additional assistance, including a contribution of about $34 million, to support the 2009 workplan for the Sudan of the United Nations and its partners. To implement this assistance, we need international and national NGOs as partners. We strongly urge the Government of the Sudan to reconsider its decision.

We are also concerned about the remark by the Government of the Sudan about the so-called Sudanizing of relief operations. Although we are not clear yet about what it means, we cannot envisage implementation of assistance at such a substantial scale without the involvement and monitoring of the United Nations.

The activities of humanitarian NGOs in the Sudan are covered by the Joint Communiqué between the Government and the United Nations on the facilitation of humanitarian activities. The Security Council, in its resolution 1828 (2008), demanded the full implementation of the Joint Communiqué and also that the Government and all armed groups ensure the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian organizations and relief personnel. I believe that it is our common responsibility as members of the Security Council to ensure the full implementation of its earlier decisions. If we fail in fulfilling this function, we must be accountable to the international community as to why it is so and who is responsible for inaction.

There is no justification at all for the Government of the Sudan to drastically curtail critical life-saving

food, water and medical support to millions of its own people. Such behaviour would make the least convincing argument for supporting the position of the Government. We appeal to the Government of the Sudan to honour its commitment and act in a responsible manner. We join the Secretary-General in his call to the Government of the Sudan to immediately take necessary actions to alleviate the situation.

The decision of the International Criminal Court will not justify any change in the obligation of the Government of the Sudan to comply with Security Council resolutions, to avoid impeding humanitarian assistance, as referred to in resolution 1828 (2008), and to ensure the safety and security of civilians and United Nations personnel. It is important that the Government of the Sudan and all rebel movements refrain from any action that would aggravate the humanitarian and security situation on the ground.

The Security Council should continue to monitor carefully future developments, including the peace process, the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the humanitarian and security situation and the question of impunity. The most important thing for us is that the Council members make the utmost effort to address the issue responsibly and to act in unison as much as possible.

We are carefully following the joint assessments by the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan of humanitarian needs in Darfur. We very much look forward to receiving a briefing on the outcome of the assessment next week.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Like others, I would like to thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov for updating us on the humanitarian situation in the Sudan.

The continued delivery of humanitarian assistance in the Sudan is vital to the survival of a significant part of the population of Darfur. Austria is therefore deeply concerned by the decision of the Government of the Sudan to expel 13 international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to revoke the licenses of three Sudanese NGOS. We are also gravely concerned by recent reports that the Sudanese Government has called for all international aid groups to leave the Sudan within one year. We have already heard — and the point has already been made — that the aid organizations affected by these decisions are responsible for some 40 to 50 per cent of the aid provided to Darfur. These organizations therefore provide an indispensable lifeline to many Sudanese civilians.

The point has already been made that over 1 million civilians are immediately affected by the decision to expel these NGOs. The United Nations depends on the NGOs as its partners. The expulsions leave behind life-threatening gaps in assistance for the population in Darfur, particularly at a time when there have been outbreaks of meningitis in Southern Darfur, including in Kalma camp. Over time, the impact of the expulsion of NGOs will be dramatic in such fields as water and sanitation, health care and food distribution. The loss of these vital aid services could lead to a serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation and to greater population movements throughout Darfur and across the border to Chad.

In accordance with the call made by the European Union just a few days ago, we therefore appeal to the Government of the Sudan to urgently reconsider its decision and to ensure that humanitarian assistance to all people in need in the Sudan be guaranteed. We are also sure that the United Nations will do everything in its power to fill some of the gaps left behind by the expelled NGOs, but we know that it is not possible at this point for the Organization, as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has made clear, to fill all these gaps. In this situation, we believe that it is essential to recall that it is the Government of the Sudan that has the primary responsibility to ensure the provision of basic services, in particular food, shelter and health care, for its civilian population.

Other speakers have already referred to the number of attacks on peacekeeping personnel and humanitarian workers and to incidents of banditry that have greatly increased in recent times. All parties to the conflict need to show restraint in the current situation. All sides must abide by their obligation to protect the civilian population under applicable rules of human rights and international humanitarian law. As far as the Government of the Sudan is concerned, we expect it to ensure the safety and security of all United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers and to refrain from any form of intimidation towards the human rights community in the Sudan.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): We thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for his briefing today. China has closely followed the

humanitarian situation in Darfur. We look forward to the report to be submitted by the joint OCHA-Government of the Sudan assessment teams, which will give us a better understanding of the overall humanitarian situation in Darfur. It is our hope that the parties concerned will work together to seek and achieve an early resolution of the crisis and thereby ensure the unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance to Darfur.

The issue of Darfur is multifaceted and complex. It encompasses such areas as the political process, the deployment of peacekeepers, humanitarian relief, justice and economic reconstruction. All activities in these fields are inextricably interrelated. Recent events have shown that the issuance by the International Criminal Court of an arrest warrant for the Sudanese President has already adversely affected the situation in Darfur. It is our hope that the parties concerned will exercise restraint in order to prevent the escalation of tensions and avoid a further negative impact on the political process, the deployment of peacekeepers and the provision of humanitarian assistance in Darfur.

We maintain that the Security Council should have a comprehensive discussion of the issue of Darfur in order to develop an integrated strategy and to advance in a balanced manner in its work to find a comprehensive solution to the issue.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Today's meeting of the Security Council is very symptomatic. It was convened in haste and without due preparation, and underscores the absence of a coordinated strategy on Darfur on the part of the international community and the Security Council that would assiduously address the political solution, peacekeeping and the search for justice. If what we are witnessing here is the expression of a certain policy, it is a dangerous one that will, unfortunately, lead first and foremost to the suffering of the people of Darfur and other regions of the Sudan.

We warmly welcome the efforts of the humanitarian organizations and the United Nations in Darfur to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians who have suffered as a result of the conflict. As a result of those efforts, we have been able to save thousands of lives in Darfur. We believe that we should continue dialogue with the Government of the Sudan regarding activities of international non-governmental agencies on that country's territory.

We await an additional detailed assessment of the situation in the country following the visit of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Holmes. All necessary humanitarian assistance must be provided to the population of Darfur. The complex humanitarian situation in Darfur is caused by the armed confrontation between the Darfur opposition and the Government of the Sudan, banditry and the violence resulting from the actions of armed groups.

It is necessary to ensure that the parties to the conflict pursue all efforts to stabilize the situation. Normalizing the humanitarian situation will be impossible without a conclusive political solution backed by the peacekeeping efforts of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. That is an integrated way to resolve the Darfur crisis, and the international community must work together to promote it.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, we would like thank the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the briefing that he has just given us. When the need for a debate on the humanitarian situation in the Sudan arose, we saw no objection to it, aware as we are of the difficult humanitarian situation currently prevailing in Darfur and of the need to find a rapid solution to it.

However, in order to take full stock of the realities in the field, we felt that it would have been better to wait until next week for a comprehensive assessment of the difficulties of humanitarian assistance in Darfur on the basis of the reliable information that we await from the assessment mission, including that which the Joint Chief Mediator, who is shortly expected in New York, could give us. We hope that those joint assessments will enable us to envisage the most appropriate solutions to address the current difficulties.

The lessons that we draw once again from the humanitarian situation in Darfur are that the concern to do justice must not create further suffering for the civilian population. We must recognize that the deplorable situation cannot be separated from the decision of the International Criminal Court to prosecute the President of the Sudan.

For its part, the Government of Burkina Faso, which deeply deplores the expulsion of the non-governmental organizations by the Sudanese authorities, will continue to encourage and to urge the

Government of the Sudan to find the ways and means to satisfactorily respond to the humanitarian situation in Darfur. We can affirm that contacts continue in that direction, and of course we hope that they will be successful. The main issue is to restore confidence between the Sudan authorities and humanitarian actors to alleviate the suffering of the population of Darfur.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I join my colleagues in thanking Mr. Khalikov for the briefing that he has given on behalf of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It is also good that a representative of the Government of the Sudan is present to give us the Sudan's point of view.

The humanitarian situation in the Sudan is clearly very grave, given many years of strife and conflict, a difficult terrain, an environment with an already weak social infrastructure; and a situation that has been further complicated by the recent indictment of President Al-Bashir. That has obviously focused his and his Government's attention more on the issue of the indictment and hence less on the humanitarian crisis facing the country.

While that is going on, the situation has been further worsened by the recent expulsion of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were heavily involved in humanitarian work in the Sudan. It is true that, because of the many years of strife, many have been crowded into camps. When many people are crowded into camps, the chances of the spread of disease increase and hence mortality among children, in particular, and among other vulnerable groups heavily increases. It is therefore no wonder that we are now seeing more deaths from meningitis, malnutrition, dehydration and simple diseases that would have otherwise been treated if we had reasonable medical services on the ground.

I do not share the view of my colleague from the Sudan that because only 13 NGOs have been expelled — and that therefore only 7 per cent of the NGO community has been affected — it is a negligible matter. What we know is that the NGOs affected are well known, big international organizations whose capacity and effectiveness have been very well tested in many trying situations. Thus, the fact that only 13 may have been expelled does not mean that their contribution is small. In fact, we have received information that the expulsion may have affected 50 to 60 per cent of the humanitarian work that is going on.

Because of that difficult situation, I call on the Government of the Sudan, in the interests of its own people, who have suffered many, many years of war and deprivation, to take urgent action to review the decision to expel those humanitarian agencies in order to ensure that the people who are in the camps, who are on the ground and who are suffering have access to water, food and basic health services.

I agree that we will have a more comprehensive discussion of this matter next week. Nevertheless, the principle of being kept regularly informed of the humanitarian situation in the Sudan is welcome, and I would like to call on my colleagues in the Sudan and the Government of the Sudan to be responsive to the concerns of the international community, which are also the concerns of the people of the Sudan.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): First of all, let me thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov once again for his briefing on the grave humanitarian situation on the ground in Darfur. Yet again and after only a short period of time, we are meeting to hear about things going from bad to worse in Darfur. After hearing the news about four peacekeepers being wounded near El Geneina last week, now we are also informed of a peacekeeper's death near Nyala. All of this is taking place in the midst of the latest humanitarian crisis created by the Government of the Sudan, which happened when they decided to expel 13 major foreign aid agencies and three Sudanese agencies, leaving more than 1 million people out in the open, vulnerable to hunger, disease and other perils. This is completely unacceptable.

Moreover, we fear that this could lead to further difficulties in neighbouring Chad by causing a possible fresh influx of refugees from Darfur. We keenly await the assessment reports from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs which we expect to be presented next week.

Again, instead of opting for a political solution and working with the international community on finding long-lasting solutions for a sustainable peace, Mr. Al-Bashir and his Government, regrettably, did not heed the calls for peace, instead opting for a worsening of the already destabilized situation.

The Government of the Sudan has a responsibility to protect not only its people but also the international peacekeepers and humanitarian workers who are in the Sudan to help the people of the Sudan. There must be accountability for gross violations of

international humanitarian law, and impunity cannot be tolerated. The Government of the Sudan must revoke its inhumane and unacceptable decision.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): We thank the Secretariat for its interim briefing on the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

Like all other members of the Council and of the international community, Turkey is concerned about the humanitarian situation in that troubled region. Owing to circumstances not of their own making, millions of innocent people in Darfur have been displaced and are in constant need of humanitarian aid in almost every conceivable form. That is a huge undertaking, and one that must continue unhindered as delays and disruptions in the effective flow of humanitarian aid can potentially have very serious consequences.

That is why Turkey believes that we must all continue to urge the Sudanese Government to reinstate the licences of the non-governmental organizations in question. We very much hope that this can be possible without any delay, for the present situation is extremely grave and cannot wait. Meanwhile, as we discussed during our most recent consultations on this subject, the Secretariat must have developed a plan that addresses the critical question of how the gap that has been created by the decision of the Sudanese Government can be filled in the short term. In that regard, we look forward to receiving a comprehensive briefing from the Secretariat with more precise information and recommendations, once the joint assessment that is ongoing between the United Nations and the Sudanese authorities is completed. Turkey believes that the Council will be in a better position to appraise the evolving humanitarian situation in Darfur once all the information from the Secretariat team on the ground has been received and analysed.

Turkey places great emphasis on the humanitarian dimension of the Darfur crisis. For its part, Turkey extends significant bilateral and multilateral humanitarian assistance to the Sudanese people, and we will continue to do so. We will also continue to support the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan in every way we can.

We must also accept the fact that the humanitarian situation cannot realistically be decoupled from the political and regional realities. As we have said on a number of occasions before, the Council must be able to take a holistic and strategic approach to this very sensitive question. We have to be able to address all the dynamics that are in play. Thus, we look forward to our meeting with the Joint Chief Negotiator, Mr. Bassolé, next week.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): We thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for his briefing.

We are concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation and rising security threats in Darfur, in the Sudan. In conflict areas, civilians become the most vulnerable group, whether in Afghanistan, Gaza, the Democratic Republic of the Congo or elsewhere. Viet Nam has always maintained that the protection of civilians and their livelihood must be a priority that all parties concerned must take into careful consideration.

While the fact that 13 non-governmental organizations operating in the Sudan have to leave the country is regrettable, it cannot be denied that the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the political process in Darfur and in the Sudan in general, has come about as a result of the decision of the International Criminal Court to indict the President of the Sudan. In the course of the Council's deliberations on the Sudan situation in general, and that of Darfur in particular, Viet Nam, together with many other delegations, reflecting the view of many United Nations Member States, has warned the Council about this unfortunate, but otherwise well-predicted, negative development.

Viet Nam has been a consistent and strong supporter of the struggle against impunity. We have always maintained that those committing crimes, especially the most serious crimes such as the crime of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, must be duly punished — rather sooner than later. At the same time, concerning the situation in the Sudan in general and in Darfur in particular, we have pointed to the need to maintain a balance between promoting the political process and waging the fight against impunity, in the interest of long-term peace and security for the Sudan and for Darfur and in the interest of the very survival and livelihood of millions of Sudanese, including those in Darfur, suffering as a result of the protracted hostilities and the worsening humanitarian situation.

In the face of the worsening situation, we call upon all parties concerned to exercise restraint and refrain from any action that may lead to further complications. We call upon them to cooperate to improve the humanitarian situation; ensure the safety of the civilian population, personnel of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and United Nations staff, as well as those doing lofty humanitarian work in the country; and resume the peace process, with a view to achieving a comprehensive political solution to the issue of the Sudan and Darfur, in the best interest of the people of the Sudan and Darfur, and of peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too wish to thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov for his briefing this afternoon.

My country welcomes the convening of this meeting. We are not seeking to punish a regime that is sinking in its own errors and needs no one's help to do so. The only purpose of this meeting is to ensure visibility for a humanitarian crisis of great magnitude — for a humanitarian situation that is endangering the health and very lives of hundreds of thousands of human beings. Through this meeting we are calling upon the international community and upon world public opinion to mobilize in order to prevent the future growth of what is already a significant crisis and the future implications of actions taken in response to judicial circumstances that have nothing whatsoever to do with the lives of these hundreds of thousands of people, whose very existence is now under threat.

The magnitude of the crisis has yet to be seen, thanks to the effectiveness of the efforts of the humanitarian organizations that have now been expelled. Tomorrow, malnutrition, hunger, disease and the deaths of many of these people will bring home to us the true scope of this crisis.

On 8 March, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that 1.5 million people no longer had access to food or health services; that drinking water, basic sanitation and hygiene services would no longer be provided to 1.16 million; that food would no longer be distributed to 1.1 million; and that 4,000 children would no longer receive assistance to address malnutrition.

The expulsion of 13 humanitarian organizations that were providing services in the country has paved the way for a great collective tragedy through the intentional abandonment of many people. Preventing those people's access to humanitarian assistance could result in their deaths, which could constitute another violation of international humanitarian law. The Sudan must remember that it is obliged to protect its population, that it must honour the commitments it has made and that it must consider revoking the decision to expel international humanitarian organizations. The Sudanization of relief is not credible. Replacing the assistance provided by nearly 8,000 humanitarian workers organized to do so is no easy task.

Finally, I am grateful for the efforts of the United Nations, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the World Food Programme, which are exploring ways to meet the urgent humanitarian needs in the Sudan and to prevent further damage.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Chairperson of the African Union.

We would have preferred to defer the briefing by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) until the completion of the joint missions carried out by the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations to assess the humanitarian situation in Darfur, so that we might have a fuller picture of the situation. Furthermore, if the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs were here, all delegations would have had the opportunity to ask him questions and receive direct responses. We also wish that those Council members who insisted that this meeting be held had been as enthusiastic and persistent when aircraft were bombing civilians in Gaza, who were deprived of food and medicine as a result of a blockade during that aggression and for as long as two years before it.

My country, as a neighbour of the Sudan and as current Chair of the African Union, is closely following developments in the humanitarian situation in Darfur. While we regret the decision by the Government of the Sudan to expel a number of humanitarian organizations, we understand the circumstances in which that decision was made. We realize the importance of cooperation in Darfur among the United Nations, the Government of the Sudan, the African Union, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid

Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the League of Arab States to facilitate the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need. We hope that the Government's decision, which has caused a number of humanitarian organizations to suspend their activities, will not affect the people and that those organizations will be replaced by others — possibly national ones — as soon as possible. We are confident that the Government will take care of its people in Darfur, who are Sudanese citizens, not — as some here are attempting to imply — citizens of any member of the Council.

Like others, we are awaiting the results of the joint assessment missions by the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan, and we hope that we will receive their report as soon as possible. Regrettably, OCHA itself, which we had hoped would be represented at today's meeting, is also awaiting those results. We believe that the Government's decision concerning a number of humanitarian organizations is one of the expected negative effects of the decision by the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant against Sudanese President Omer Al-Bashir. We cannot separate the two issues, and we have no doubt that the Court's decision has created a new reality in the Sudan. As we have stated before, imposing the Court's procedures at the expense of the peace process will neither do justice nor put an end to the conflict in Darfur; however, it could threaten the stability of the Sudan and the entire region and undermine the whole political process, both in Darfur and in South Sudan.

While that does not mean that we do not want those responsible for crimes to be brought to justice, we believe it is essential to create an atmosphere conducive to achieving peace. Rather than taking measures such as the Court's decision, which, under the pretext of doing justice, could complicate peace efforts and increase instability, we merely seek to support the political process through other means. That is what why the African Union, a major partner of the United Nations, has taken a number of decisions — including, most recently, at its summit in Addis Ababa — highlighting the need to invoke article 16 of the Rome Statute.

Regrettably, the Council has yet to respond to those and other decisions taken at the regional level, including by the League of Arab States. The Sudan needs international efforts that are in consonance with — and not in contradiction of — its national efforts and the efforts of the African Union to avert the negative effects of the lack of security and the current instability in the country.

We do not believe that the Security Council needs more affirmations of the possible negative consequences for the stability of Sudan. Does it need more evidence of the repercussions that the decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court has had? We have all heard the statements by certain rebel groups in the Sudan. They in themselves constitute a warning to us here in the Security Council.

It is indeed urgent that the Security Council respond to the various national and regional concerns and act to invoke article 16 of the Rome Statute in response to the decision of the African Union that was adopted at its most recent summit and the recent decision of the League of Arab States.

We know that the relations of some members of this Council with the Sudan are tense. This is quite normal in international relations and indeed acceptable, but what is neither natural nor normal is that the Security Council be used as a forum to settle accounts with the Government of the Sudan or any other Government. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya calls on all member States to refrain from such actions so that they do not further damage the credibility of this Council.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council. The next speaker is the representative of the Czech Republic, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kaiser (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Rashid Khalikov of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for his comprehensive briefing.

Allow me to inform the Council that on 16 March, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union met in Brussels and adopted conclusions in which they called upon the Government of the Sudan to urgently reconsider its decision to expel 13 international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs)and revoke the licences of three local NGOs. The Ministers also called on the Government of the Sudan to ensure that humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people in the Sudan be continuously guaranteed, guided by the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Moreover, the Ministers recalled the declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union. In this declaration, the EU expresses its belief that the continued delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Sudan is of the highest importance to saving lives and is crucial to creating an environment conducive to the implementation of all peace processes in the Sudan, which the European Union will continue to support strongly.

The decision by the Government of the Sudan to expel 13 international NGOs from the Sudan and to revoke the licences of three local NGOs is a direct and immediate threat to the continuity of international humanitarian assistance in Darfur and damages eight operations in the rest of the northern Sudan. These NGOs provide a vital service to millions of vulnerable Sudanese civilians, guided by the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the Sudan has asked for the floor once again, and I now give him the floor.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I asked for the floor to very briefly clarify a few facts regarding, first, the incomplete description of the situation in Darfur and the Sudan in general. Such a description will neither advance political settlement nor help our people in Darfur, the people of the Sudan in general or the continent as a whole. Talking about the Sudan and its leadership as if decisions are being taken by an individual is a flagrant violation of diplomatic norms and indeed a deviation from the Charter of this Organization.

Decisions in the Sudan are taken by institutions. The Sudan is not a failed State. It is a country that has institutions, and the competent institutions responsible for non-governmental organizations in the Sudan carefully studied the situation and made their decision after having obtained evidence that established beyond a reasonable doubt that those organizations had crossed the line, as my colleague stated earlier.

We expected this Council to deliberate today on the extent to which those non-governmental organizations violated the resolutions of the General Assembly that regulate humanitarian work, most notably resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991. This Council knows that encroaching on the sovereignty of Member States is a violation of the Charter. That is the first issue.

The second issue is that the statements of all the member States here reached one conclusion. All of them are waiting for the conclusion of the joint evaluation mission, which is composed of representatives of the United Nations and the Sudan and is still conducting its investigation in Darfur. What, then, is behind all this hurry and commotion? Why is the Council meeting today, before the relevant committee comes back with its report? We can only deduce that the non-governmental organizations that are the source of all this commotion are not normal organizations. These are organizations that have crossed the line, and this is the irrevocable decision of the Government of the Sudan.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.